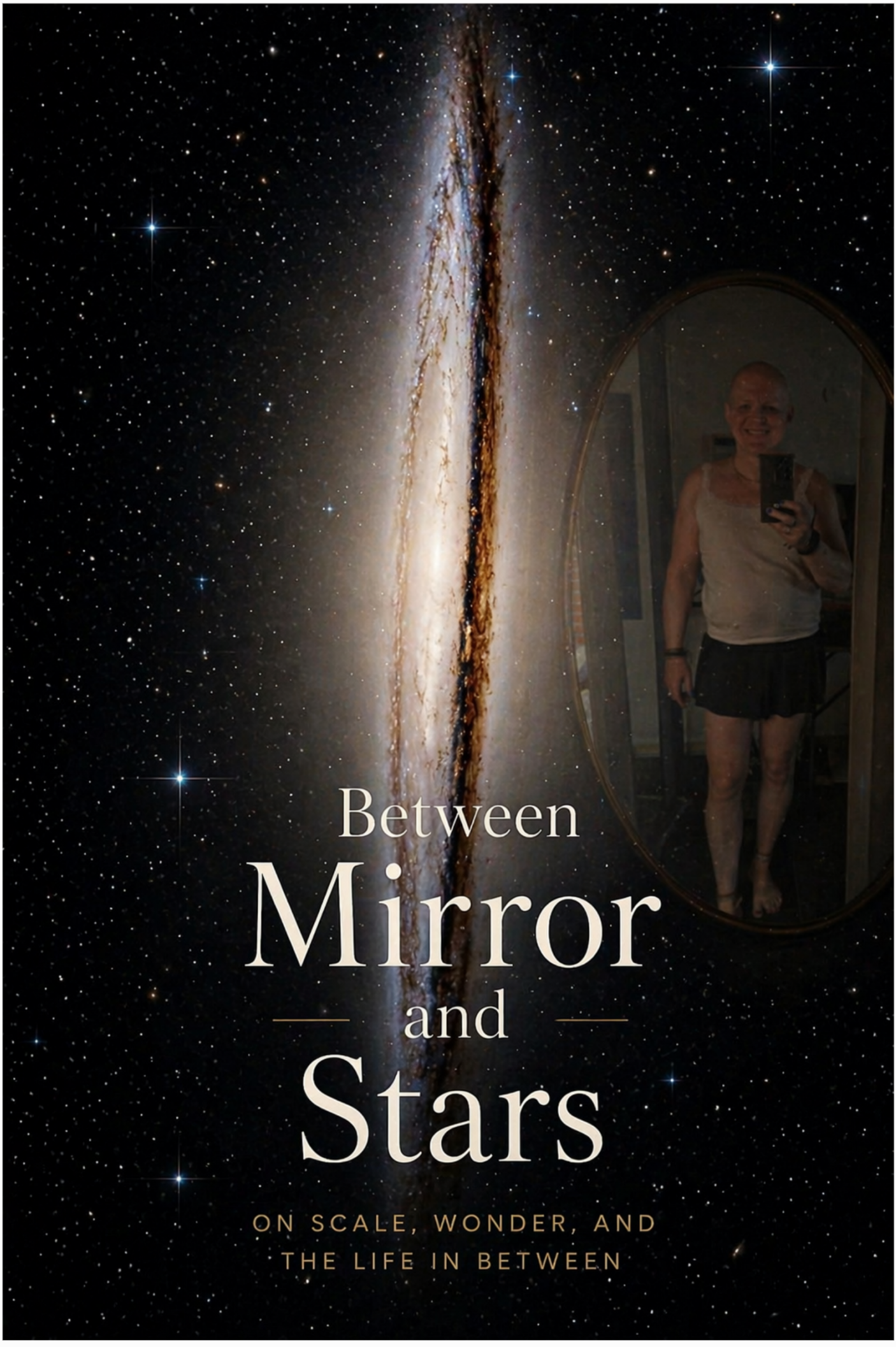
Between
Mirror
and
Stars
ON SCALE, WONDER, AND
THE LIFE IN BETWEEN

You look at the galaxy and something in the mind falls quiet.

There it hangs: an elliptical body of light, soft at the edges, denser toward a hidden center, composed with a grace no human hand designed. It is strangely beautiful because it was never made for admiration. No audience was expected. No applause was required.

Across distances the mind cannot properly measure, it simply became what it is and remained there in silence.

Its light began traveling long before your present concerns existed. Before your current name for yourself. Before the faces you love aged into the faces they now wear. Before the latest fashions of outrage, identity, certainty, despair.

While generations entered and exited the stage, while cities expanded and tired, while private hopes rose and broke, that light continued its patient journey.

Now it arrives.

Not to emperors, not to priests, not to those who declared themselves important. It arrives to whoever happens to look.

This is already enough to disturb the ordinary order of things.

Because the ordinary order insists that what is nearest matters most. Your inbox matters more than Andromeda. Your irritation matters more than stellar nurseries. Your reflection matters more than a billion suns. Daily life trains the eye toward immediacy, and not without reason. Bills must be

paid. Bodies must be washed. Messages answered. Bread bought.

The local keeps us alive.

But then the galaxy appears, and another scale enters the room.
You become aware of your own face reflected nearby.

We live in an age of mirrors.
Some are made of glass.
Most are made of screens,

profiles, reactions, metrics, poses, curated wounds, managed desirability. We are constantly returned to ourselves, constantly invited to edit, display, defend, brand, confess, optimize. The self has become both product and prison.

Then beside all this self-attention, a galaxy.

The contrast can be medicinal.

Your reflection, which moments ago seemed urgent, now looks provisional. The expression you have been rehearsing loosens. The anxieties arranged so carefully around appearance, status, tribe, relevance, begin to shrink back toward their true dimensions.

Not because they are unreal, but because they are partial.

A mirror tells you how you appear.
A galaxy reminds you that appearance is not the whole story.

Many people misread such moments and call them nihilism. They say: compared to that, I am nothing. It sounds sober, but it is lazy arithmetic.

Size is only one measure, and

often the least interesting one.

Yes, you are tiny in extension. Brief in duration. Limited in reach.

Yet you are also a site where the universe becomes conscious of itself, however modestly. Through incalculable chains of formation and accident, matter organized into sensation, memory, language,

craft, longing, mathematics, and finally the capacity to stand still before beauty and know that beauty is occurring.

The galaxy does not know it is beautiful.

You do.

This fact can be overstated sentimentally, but it can also be understated cynically. Better to hold it plainly. The cosmos produced not only

stars and dust, but witnesses. And witnesses are not trivial.

To look well is already a kind of participation.

Still, the feeling is rarely pure comfort.

Awe often carries fear.
Why? Because the self prefers rooms scaled to itself. It likes horizons it can manage, stories in which human motives remain

central, distances that can be crossed, questions that can be answered before sleep.

The galaxy offers none of this. It exceeds your habits of comprehension. It is there without asking permission from your nervous system.

This can feel like vertigo.

Yet if you remain with the feeling a little longer, another tone enters.

The same vastness that unsettles you also includes you. You are not outside reality peering in through glass.

You belong to the same order that produced that distant ellipse of light. The atoms in your blood were forged in older furnaces. The consciousness doing the looking is not foreign to the universe, but one of its temporary expressions.

The distance does not exile you. It contains you.

Older language called states like this oceanic: a loosening of hard boundaries, a sense that the cramped self is not the only frame available. The term can sound antique now, but the experience remains modern enough.

It may happen while standing in a bathroom.

You look from the galaxy to the mirror.

The face looking back is familiar and unfinished. Tired perhaps. Decorated perhaps. Doubtful, proud, wounded, playful, aging, becoming. Like all human faces, it carries history and improvisation at once. It is not fixed matter, but ongoing interpretation. And suddenly the mirror changes function.

It no longer asks only, “How do I look.”

It begins to ask, “What am I, in this scale of things.”

That is a better question.

Not because identity becomes irrelevant, but because it becomes situated. The dramas of selfhood remain real — gender, love, shame, desire, belonging,

exclusion, style, loneliness, courage. These are not cancelled by galaxies. They are clarified by them.

Under larger skies, one may become less vain and more tender.

Less obsessed with image, more curious about being.

Less interested in winning mirrors, more interested in inhabiting a life.

This is why modern people may need galaxies more than temples.

Temples once placed the individual inside symbolic vastness. They arranged stone, ritual, music, and scale so a person could feel both small and held.

Many no longer live inside those structures. Instead we inhabit systems of reflection:

commerce, performance, algorithmic mirrors that return us endlessly to ourselves.

No wonder fatigue spreads.

A self cannot be nourished by self-reference alone.

Sometimes it needs an encounter with what does not flatter it.

A galaxy does not praise you.

It does not condemn you. It does not ask for engagement. It does not care whether you are trending. In that indifference there can be relief.

You are freed, briefly, from centrality.

This freedom should be handled carefully.

Boundlessness without orientation can become

panic. One should keep a lighthouse nearby: breath, floor, body, the known room, the next kind task. Wonder is healthiest when tethered to the ordinary.

Look long enough at the distant ellipse of light. Then look back at the face in the mirror.

One image is ancient fire arranged across unimaginable space.

The other is a temporary being trying to become real before time runs out.

Neither should be mocked.

Both are improbable.

And for a moment, if grace allows, each deepens the other.

Then the moment passes.

The mirror becomes a mirror again. The day resumes. Messages wait. Something must be cleaned, answered, forgiven, carried.

But perhaps a slight correction remains.

You speak softer.

You worry smaller.

You become less fascinated by surfaces and more patient

with depth.

You understand that you are not the center of things, which is different from being nothing.

And somewhere beyond all private weather, the galaxy continues in silence.